



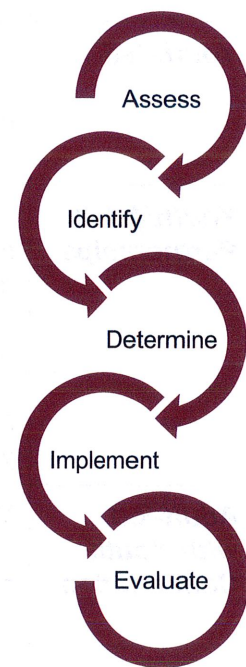
Plenary 8: Youth Advisory vs. Youth Action

Local Continuums of Care (CoCs) are increasingly aware of the importance of direct youth action and participation in the development and implementation of the coordinated community response to prevent and end youth homelessness. When youth are engaged during the development of projects, projects are stronger, and youth are more likely to accept and adopt them, thereby increasing their impact.

Steps for Engaging Youth in Action

Through the Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program (YHDP), 100-day Challenges to End Youth Homelessness, and local efforts to prevent and end youth homelessness, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) developed the following steps as recommendations for engaging youth in local action:

1. **Assess** how the CoC and its projects are currently engaging youth in action and what engagement should look like in the future. A project's ability to support youth action will be affected by current staff and resource capacity, its purpose for involving youth, and internal organizational support for involving youth. Organizational capacity and support are key components in sustaining youth involvement.
2. **Identify** and **consult** organizations that are successfully supporting youth action, engagement, and collaboration to learn how they started. Ask for recommendations or lessons learned from participating youth, adults who are working in partnership with youth, and project staff who facilitate or administer the projects. CoCs can also learn from projects that have tried but failed to successfully engage youth and from youth who are not currently part of CoC or project-level work but who are interested in developing strategies to help the CoC and its projects be youth-focused.
3. **Determine** how youth will be engaged in the CoC and individual projects. Youth with lived experience should be at the forefront of this process.
4. **Implement** a youth recruitment plan and an adult engagement strategy once the decision has been made about how the CoC and individual projects will support youth action. A recruitment plan outlines how youth will be identified for roles in CoC committees, youth boards, or project leadership structures and how to keep youth engaged in the long-term. Issues to consider include recruiting a full representation of the local youth population (e.g., LGBTQ youth, youth of color, pregnant or parenting youth), skill and capacity-building opportunities for youth, and training needs. The adult engagement strategy should involve showing leaders in the CoC and in its youth-serving projects the value of youth engagement and training them to work with youth in a way





that is respectful and affirming. Youth should be involved in framing adult engagement strategies and developing and providing training to the greatest extent possible.

5. **Evaluate** success and areas for increased effort by developing a plan to review and monitor youth involvement regularly. During the evaluation, CoCs should engage both youth and adults to evaluate effectiveness.

Levels of Action and Decision-Making for Youth			
Levels of Control	Level of Decision-Making	Meaningful Roles and Responsibilities	Level of Leadership Development and Skill-Building
<i>Youth-led</i>	Youth make all decisions; they may or may not consult adults	All roles and responsibilities developed and carried out by youth; older youth may mentor younger youth	High
<i>Youth/Adult Partnerships</i>	Decision-making is shared; planning and designing activities are shared by youth and adults equally; differences are negotiated between youth and adults	All roles and responsibilities are shared by youth and adults equally or are based on skills and interests	High
<i>Adult-led with Youth Consultation</i>	Youth input is sought, but adults make the final decisions	Youth have medium to high levels of responsibility; the significance of the activity is medium to high; youth help define and create choices with the approval of adults	Medium to high
<i>Adult-led, with Youth Interests Considered</i>	Some choices are offered to youth by adults, but no input is sought; youth have little role in decision-making	Responsibility is low and level of meaningful involvement may be low; adults decide if, how, and when youth participate	Low
<i>Adult-led, with Youth Given Token Roles</i>	Youth have no real decision-making power	No meaningful role provided; youth participate primarily so adults can say they have youth present	Low to nonexistent
<i>Adult-led, with Youth as "Objects"</i>	Youth have no decision-making power and are passive participants	Youth are not given any meaningful roles; adults provide services to youth	Nonexistent



Profiles in Preventing and Ending Youth Homelessness: Youth Action Boards¹

The Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program (YHDP) requires the establishment of a Youth Action Board (YAB) to be eligible for funding. A YAB is a group of at least three individuals age 24 and younger, at least two-thirds of whom are homeless or were formerly homeless, that has full membership in the CoC and is included in the CoC's policymaking decisions, particularly on policies that relate to preventing and ending youth homelessness.

Creating a YAB is one important way a community can leverage youth input in a meaningful and ongoing way. Further, participation in a YAB can empower youth by providing opportunities for positive youth development, youth choice, confidence-building, and leadership. To develop a YAB, community partners and youth need to think through the following:

- Meaningful involvement and roles for youth, including opportunities to develop leadership and advocacy skills.
- Compositions and models that work well for the local community (e.g., the number of youth involved, youth representing different program areas, best times and places for meetings).
- Mechanics for involving youth (e.g., stipends, transportation, child care to support parenting youth, community service hours, professional development opportunities).
- Addressing skepticism among community partners about the value of youth contributions or youths' ability to fully participate in all aspects of the process.

Below are examples of the YABs established by the Round 1 YHDP communities, including information on YAB composition and responsibilities through the coordinated community planning process.

Anchorage, AK

Anchorage's Youth Task Force is a diverse group of youth and young adults who have experienced homelessness and who share their voices, commitment, time, and talents to achieve the shared vision of this project.

YOUTH TASK FORCE: RESPONSIBILITIES, EXPECTATIONS, AND FREQUENCY

- Responsibilities**
- Decision-making representation on the Anchorage Coalition to End Homelessness (ACEH)
 - Works in tandem with YHDP Leadership Team
 - Supported by Covenant House Alaska (CHA), United Way, and Anchorage Youth Development Coalition (AYDC) staff

¹ The term "Youth Advisory Board" used in the fiscal year (FY) 2016 NOFA was changed to "Youth Action Board" in the FY 2017 NOFA to better represent their active and integral role in YHDP.



Expectations

- Participates in the YHDP planning process through workgroups and Youth Task Force meetings
- Provides input based on lived experience of homelessness
- Partners with ACEH and YHDP Leadership Team in creating and administering a YHDP project selection process

Frequency

- At end of YHDP implementation, Youth Task Force will have option to continue under ACEH
- Quarterly meetings with the Youth Task Force during implementation

As of December 2017, the Youth Task Force had 21 members, five of whom form a steering committee for the Task Force. Ninety-five percent of Youth Task Force members are youth of color. Fourteen of the members (66 percent) experienced homelessness, have been in foster care, or both. Of those who have not reported experiencing homelessness, approximately one-third are first-generation Americans. Forty-seven percent of the members self-identified as LGBTQ, and two-thirds of the members are former or current residents of CHA.

San Francisco, CA²

The San Francisco Youth Policy and Advisory Committee (YPAC) was formed in October 2016 to provide a youth voice for the CoC in its development of a response to youth homelessness locally and the San Francisco YHDP application. Its members, including youth with current or former experiences of homelessness, are involved in every step of the implementation of YHDP at the local level.

YPAC has become an open platform for San Francisco's youth to have direct access to service providers as well as government officials who can directly affect the types of services they receive. YPAC has spoken with members of the Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing, the Department of Health, and numerous other entities to expand their knowledge of available services while simultaneously broadening the perspective of those providers about what is still needed. Monthly meetings have become regularly attended forums for gathering input and feedback on the homeless response system by those who access it.

In addition, the YPAC continues to be involved with the grant, providing feedback and insight at the YHDP planning meetings as to what is needed in the community to help end youth homelessness. YPAC has updated the Local Homeless Coordinating Board (LHCB) on San Francisco's progress and issues pertaining to the community.

Santa Cruz, CA

This YAB is made up of 29 members with current or former lived experience of homelessness. The YAB met weekly during the development of the YHDP Coordinated Community Plan. The weekly meetings provided guidance and support on all aspects of the YHDP, including Community Steering Committee agenda design; facilitation of portions of the steering meeting;

² Additional information San Francisco's YPAC gathered from the following resource: Street Sheet. (2017, September 19). *Zak Franet: From street politics to public policy*. Street Sheet Staff. Retrieved from <http://www.streetsheet.org/?p=3947>



input on steering workgroup deliverables, development and input on YHDP projects and project elements, and input, review, and approval of the YHDP planning grant application.

During the implementation of the Coordinated Community Plan, the YAB played an essential role in the development of criteria for YHDP project applications providing guidance and feedback to community agencies, as well as in the review of project applications to assure that they align with youth needs and community priorities. The YAB will also play an integral role in further data collection and the analysis of youth needs, including the best ways to integrate youth into the local coordinated entry system. Most importantly, the YAB members continue to share their honest stories and fuel the inspiration that drives the group and the community into action. An unanticipated benefit of participation in the YHDP planning process is that youth have developed connections with local service providers and are being integrated into some of those agencies' planning processes for programs and services. Their participation is also creating a potential for youth employment.

Connecticut Balance of State

The Youth Action Hub (YAH) serves as the official YAB of Connecticut Balance of State CoC. YAH is a youth-led center of research and advocacy under the guidance of Dr. Heather Mosher at the Institute for Community Research. The Institute for Community Research, an independent nonprofit organization located in Hartford, helps communities and organized groups advocate for social and policy change through the use of innovative and rigorous research to inform collaborative efforts.

YAH is a group of eight young adults between the ages of 18–25 (six of whom are under the age of 24) who are part-time employees of the Institute for Community Research. YAH members have experience with housing instability and a desire to carry out research and advocacy around youth homelessness in Connecticut. Dr. Mosher at the Institute for Community Research guides the YAH's work using an evidence-based youth participatory action research training curriculum. YAH members work as researchers, advocates, and partners in the statewide effort to end youth homelessness. The YAH is funded by the Melville Charitable Trust, with additional support from the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving and the Connecticut Departments of Children and Families and Housing. The YAH members are partners on the statewide workgroup to end youth homelessness in Connecticut.

CONNECTICUT YAH: COMPLETED PROJECTS

Study on Young People's Access to Housing Services in Connecticut (2016)

In 2016, YAH completed a rigorous study that examined young adults' experiences with trying to access housing services through a helpline used as the state's coordinated entry point for housing services. The purpose of the study was to improve access to housing resources for youth in Connecticut. Recommendations based on study findings were shared with a coalition of partners and key stakeholders across the state and are being used in ongoing efforts to improve the coordinated entry system for youth. (For more information, go to



[https://youthactionhub.org/research/study-on-young-peoples-access-to-housing-services-in-ct/.](https://youthactionhub.org/research/study-on-young-peoples-access-to-housing-services-in-ct/))

Legislative Advocacy	YAH participates in legislative advocacy efforts regarding reforms designed to implement the State Action Plan to End Youth Homelessness in Connecticut.
Stakeholder and Advisors in Statewide Policymaking, Planning, & Implementation of YYA Workgroup Plan	YAH is recognized as a partner and stakeholder member of several statewide workgroups that are tasked with developing effective strategies to identify and reach youth who need housing assistance and to improve the coordinated entry process for youth to access and obtain the resources they need. This youth–adult partnership is crucial in the planning, design, and implementation phases to ensure planned changes are relevant and customized to youth.
HUD’s Point-in-Time Count—“Youth Count”	In November 2016, YAH partnered with the Greater Hartford Region Youth Engagement Team to train and coordinate volunteers to administer the youth count survey in the Greater Hartford region. The trainings included a webinar and a curriculum for trainings, which included topics such as sensitivity, proper ways of approaching youth, and proper ways to ask questions of youth. YAH went on to collaborate in developing a map containing hot spots where youth gravitate to plan routes for the youth count. This map and plan included locations and times for when it was best to survey youth in different areas.

CONNECTICUT YAH: ONGOING PROJECTS

Improving the Coordinated Entry System for Youth	YAH works closely with a statewide coalition of stakeholders to improve the coordinated entry system for youth in Connecticut, including work to streamline the intake process and to identify and develop new youth-friendly entry points.
Evaluation of Rapid Re-Housing Program for Young Adults	YAH is conducting a 2-year study on the impact of The Connection, Inc.’s Start Program, a rapid re-housing program for 18- to 24-year-old youth, regarding young adults’ long-term vulnerability/risk, psychosocial well-being, and housing stability over the program period and 1 year afterward. The study will also identify key components of the rapid re-housing program that drive outcomes for youth and examine the relationship between supportive/unsupportive social network ties, mental health, and housing stability.



System Dynamics Modeling to Identify Leverage Points for Ending Youth Homelessness

YAH representatives serve as members of the planning committee and on the system dynamics modeling researcher-facilitator team for this project. Phase 1 of the project involved using participatory system dynamics modeling to map the structural dynamics that drive the problem of youth homelessness in Connecticut and to build systems thinking and collaboration among system stakeholders across multiple service sectors and youth who have experienced housing instability/homelessness. YAH continued to be involved as partners during Phase 2 (November/December 2017 to June/July 2018), which aimed to develop a simulation model to identify leverage points that will produce the most significant outcomes in efforts to end youth homelessness.

LGBTQ+ and Youth Homelessness Photovoice Project

Photovoice is a research method that combines photography, narratives, and social action to catalyze awareness and dialogue. YAH is carrying out a Photovoice project focused on the issue of LGBTQ+ youth homelessness to amplify the voices of that community. Two primary goals of this project are (1) to build a coordinated network of youth leaders around the state that will become advocates and partners to end youth homelessness in Connecticut and (2) to increase awareness and enforcement of legislation that protects the rights of LGBTQ+ youth.

YHDP Planning and Youth Action Board (YAB)

YAH has been an active part of the planning group for YHDP. Together with partners, YAH created a youth collaboration plan and established a timeline to map out its involvement in the YHDP process, as well as other youth involvement in research, discussions, and decision-making for the various stages of the YHDP effort. This collaboration plan details the need for increasing the number of YAB members and lists various youth groups and organizations that can be part of the YAB network.

Kentucky Balance of State

The Kentucky Balance of State YAB currently has five active members. The recruitment goal for the YAB is to have a youth representative from each of the eight Southeastern Kentucky Promise Zone counties that make up the YHDP grantee community. County-level organizations have and will continue to recommend youth to serve on the YAB. The purpose of the YAB is to ensure youth voice, guidance, and governance for the development and implementation of the coordinated community plan. The YAB will establish its own charter.



Grand Traverse, Antrim, and Leelanau Counties, MI

The YHDP leadership team includes YAB members, and they are the most critical piece needed to successfully address this. The YAB was created to fully incorporate a consistent youth voice into the Northwest Michigan Youth Plan. The McKinney-Vento district liaison reached out to past students who had experienced unstable housing as a means of engaging and recruiting YAB members.

The YAB meets every other Monday evening for 2 hours at a time. Structurally, it is made up of a chairperson and four members. Preliminary plans to consistently compensate YAB members for their time on projects, meetings, and specific skills used have been established. The current membership meets HUD's requirement of having more than three members, two-thirds of whom have experienced homelessness, and representation from youth of color, LGBTQ+, and parenting youth.

At a minimum, the YAB chairperson is an active member of the YHDP planning team and leads YAB meetings to develop plan strategies. Members of the YHDP leadership team attend YAB meetings to get direction with creating goals, objectives, and policies, as well as to ensure that the YAB members approve all parts of the Northwest Michigan Youth Plan. The YAB seeks to grow but acknowledges that biases attached to youth experiencing housing instability may create barriers to both attracting YAB members and providing services. To build the needed support and advocacy for youth experiencing homelessness, the YAB will reach out to the general youth community in the following ways:

MICHIGAN YAB: YOUTH OUTREACH AND ADVOCACY

Create an inventory of regional youth leadership/youth voice programs/committees.

Local libraries, schools, churches, and community organizations currently have youth advisory groups that do everything from reviewing internal policy to making funding decisions to providing outreach into the communities. Mapping these opportunities to reach out to youth who are already active in their communities is the first step to understanding the resources available and bringing about an increased understanding of youth homelessness.

Develop presentations to both inform and build advocacy.

Those with lived experience tell the story of youth homelessness best. YAB will develop presentations that both inform and provide suggestions for youth to provide community support and advocacy. YAB will reach out to participate in community opportunities and provide presentations.

Hold Youth Connect events for all youth.

Youth Connect events offer a great opportunity to reach out, identify, and engage youth. These events are open to all local youth, regardless of their housing status, and offer connections to community resources and well as opportunities for youth to connect and learn about each other in a variety of ways.



Identify ways to add different perspectives.

The shared experience of housing instability among YAB members allows a well-rounded perspective of youth homelessness. However, it is recognized that the perspectives of youth who have watched their journeys from the outside, or even those who have no related experience, can also contribute to understanding both the problems and solutions to youth homelessness. YAB will develop a process for bringing these outside perspectives into their decision-making, including surveys and possible focus group discussions.

Cincinnati/Hamilton County, OH

The Lighthouse Youth Advisory Council (LYAC) was established in 2013 to give youth experiencing homelessness and youth with foster care experience a say in changing youth-serving systems. Since 2013, LYAC members have helped influence their elected officials to pass Fostering Connections, trained foster parents on how to best support teenagers, and shared their experiences in conference keynotes and workshops.

LYAC provides direct input on all issues related to youth homelessness. This includes insight and expertise during the YHDP planning process, generating ideas for system innovation, and feedback on strategies to reach our goals and objectives. At their monthly LYAC meetings, they approve recommendations for the Coordinated Community Plan and all project applications.

The role of youth is critical in the YHDP implementation process. The following activities support the decision-making role of LYAC members and encourage increased youth engagement:

- Host monthly LYAC meetings to recruit and engage a diverse array of youth.
- Hire two youth lead positions to focus specifically on LYAC member recruitment and YHDP activities (YHDP funded).
- Support youth participation on the CoC Youth Workgroup.
- Provide stipends and transportation funds for youth participation in YHDP activities (YHDP funded).
- Support LYAC in working with the Cincinnati technical assistance team to identify ways to strengthen youth participation in the YHDP process.

For the submission of all projects and the final plan, the youth leads (representing the LYAC) must feel comfortable and affirm the plan and projects. If one of the key partners, including LYAC, does not approve the plan/project, then conversations will continue.

Ohio Balance of State

The YAB is a formal committee within the Ohio Balance of State CoC (BoSCoC). The YAB approves the Coordinated Community Plan to Prevent and End Youth Homelessness, as well as any new projects that will be requesting HUD funding as part of the demonstration program. In addition to approving work of the YHDP team, a YAB member sits on most YHDP workgroups. YAB members also participate in a multitude of system and project planning events



that occur outside of formal YHDP team or workgroup meetings and are charged with helping to identify other strategies to solicit feedback from, and collaborate with, youth in the region.

Austin/Travis County, TX

The Austin Youth Collective (AYC) was formed in November 2016 and serves as the Youth Advisory Council for the Austin/Travis County CoC. As of September 2017, there were eight regular members with a recruitment goal to increase membership to 10 youth.

AYC members meet monthly and serve on the YHDP Leadership Advisory Council and Membership Council. Three AYC members also participate on YHDP subcommittees with initial research and planning on the subcommittees to address the issue of youth homelessness.

Seattle/King County, WA

Between April and September 2017, the YAB met more than 15 times to establish their internal process and charter (including the roles, meeting structure and frequency, and internal decision-making process), to review and provide reactions and input on ideas coming from the workgroups, to develop and propose project ideas for the YHDP plan, and to convene with the larger group of decision-makers and joint committee to help develop and select project proposals for inclusion in the YHDP plan. YAB members have also participated in All Home Board meetings and attended and helped facilitate stakeholder meetings, participated on the YHDP Homeless Management and Information System (HMIS) team calls, participated in national YHDP convening and other national learning opportunities (Connection 2017 and 40 to None Summit), and in YHDP program design meetings.

As a recognized committee in the CoC, the YAB provides direct input on all issues related to youth homelessness with a near-term focus on developing the YHDP plan. The YAB participates in planning and program design, offers insight and expertise throughout the YHDP planning process, generates ideas for system innovation, provides input and feedback on strategies to reach goals/objectives, and approves the YHDP plan and all project applications.

Note: This document was generated by technical assistance (TA) providers to support direct TA for the Forum on Ending Youth Homelessness, and it incorporates information from multiple sources without attribution to the original source material. References to original source material are provided in the relevant resource sections of this document. The information was collected from publicly available online sources and, therefore, not every piece of information may be completely accurate or up to date. Participants who notice incorrect or outdated information are encouraged to speak up so that everyone at the forum receives the most complete and current information available. This document is not endorsed by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), or any other federal agency, and it is not intended for distribution outside the Forum on Ending Youth Homelessness.



Resources

- **[Guide for Engaging Youth in Decision-making and Planning](#)**: May 2017 guide providing guidance on how to engage youth in decision-making processes and the development of projects
- **[Youth Involvement and Engagement Assessment Tool](#)**: Online assessment tool that offers a mechanism for organizations and community partners to define how youth are involved and whether strategies are working to sustain youth engagement
- **[Initiating Youth Engagement: Assessment Tool](#)**: This assessment tool is intended as a starting point for reflection and discussion among a planning team or organizational stakeholders (including youth and adults)
- **[Round 1 YHDP Coordinated Community Plans](#)**: A central requirement of the YHDP is that each selected community develops a coordinated community plan (CCP) to prevent and end youth homelessness. HUD approved all YHDP Round 1 communities' CCPs by January 13, 2018. The approved versions of the CCPs are all publicly available on the HUD Exchange
- **[GenerationOn Game Changers: Establishing A Youth Advisory Council Toolkit](#)**: This toolkit is not specific to youth homelessness but offers some structure for youth looking to take leadership on community issues

